

Classic Poetry Series

Frank Wilmot

- poems -

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Echoes

I have returned into my land of day,
And lo! it is not light!
And she who claims my homage is betrayed.
I went to furious fighting in far lands
To slay the beast that followed her with leering eyes,
But surely he sailed past me on the night wave
And piled my land in silent ruin cunningly.

Australia, speak!
Surely you have not died in such a little while?
Why will you taunt me with your silences
That make all sacrifice seem in vain?

Speak in a voice of your own.
I do not understand what things you tell me
With these strange lips and foreign tones;
Is it not enough
That your wharves are piled with alien merchandise -
Must your young soul be flooded with foreign despairs?

Of old the adventurous ships
Freighted with golden visions and gallant men
Swung into our sun-splashed harbours
Bringing their woes with them,
Their woes with them.
And all our blazing suns have not burned them white
Nor sharp winds blown them clean.

While I protected your body
No one remembered your soul;
The fumes of the ancient hells have invaded your spirit,
And old reputed disaster has broken your heart.
Australia, speak!

While I have lain broken with wounds,"
In the scorching sands of the north,
Have old men come ravishing you?
Has my enemy been here?
Speak to me;
Name me the betrayers!
Yet, mayhap you are learning to adore them!

I have gone with vain women,
And women veiled and strange, in foreign lands,
But always I dreamed of you,
And I said to the women I fondled,
'Oh, there's an adorable lady fairer than you!'
Now, when I return to these shores,
Something is gone from your grace,
And your voice it is smothered and strange;
The poisonous winds have soiled the shining hair
Of the fair lady I went out to save.

She does not speak in a voice that is her own,
But mumbles echoes of things half comprehended,
And round her red lips hover alien words.
Is it your hear that has changed,
Or, from the things I have suffered,
Have I acquired new vision?

I have returned into a world of shadows,
I have returned into a land of echoes,
A thin-drawn filament of echoed impulses
Smothers your gleaming spaces.
Echoes of false, unworthy things
That blast the older worlds I've loitered in
Hide you from me,
Hold you from me,
Blast your green gullies,
Cloud your arbour'd roads
For you I have struggled and sinned,
Stood firmly against the lure of a comforting death,

And now you are dying, betrayed,
Bloodless, pale as a dream,
Murmuring foreign ideas,
Brooding on the Romanoffs, the Syndicates, the Boyne!
Shuddering in echoes of ceaseless war and causeless revolution,
Drowned in echoes of reflected troubles.
Dying amid your groves of golden trees,
Surrounded by the unregarded dawn!
So do I see you now!
Is it your heart that has changed,
Or, from the things I have suffered,
Have I acquired new vision?

Australia, speak!
I have brought you trinkets and trophies and banners,
New law, new impulses, new dreams;
Droves of worshippers utter your name in awe,
The name I have written in blood on the moving sands,
In stars on the blue night's face
That the sea calls back to the blue.

Australia, speak!
Is this the country I went forth to save?
Do you remember my name,
Or is my memory lost in your surging echoes,
And your voice, my voice, silent for evermore?
Waken and speak to me,
For the dawn, all unregarded,
Fades ...

Of old the adventurous ships
Swung into our sun-splashed harbours

Bringing their woes

Frank Wilmot

Edelweiss

THERE grows a white, white flower
By the wild Alps of romance;
And who would reach its dainty leaves
Takes life and death in chance.

There is a dark, dark cavern
Where a woman goes alone,
Takes hope and peril in her hand
And fights Death on his throne.

To our heart's breathless calling
She comes from the cavern wild,
Holding in her exhausted arms
A small, white, blossoming child.

Frank Wilmot

Progress

THEY'VE builded wooden timber tracks,
And a trolly with screaming brakes
Noses into the secret bush,
Into the birdless brooding bush,
And the tall old gums it takes.
And down in the sunny valley,
The snorting saw screams slow;
O bush that nursed my people,
O bush that cursed my people,
That flayed and made my people,
I weep to watch you go

Frank Wilmot

The Last Port

I WROUGHT and battled and wept, near and afar
I scanned the secret of the bud and star.

Hill-road and desert, and the hurrying street
Know well the impress of my restless feet!

Then some one came with soft, caressing glance,
Slow, like a woman out of all romance.

Love closed around me these warm, folded wings—
That was the end of all my wanderings.

Frank Wilmot